HIROAKI SAMURA
BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL
DARK
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BLADE OF THE
IMMORTAL
130
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BADGER HOLE
3 of 4
無限の住人
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI

Immortal *rōnin*, vowed to protect Rin and aid her in her quest for revenge.

RIN

Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dōjō* which was destroyed by the Ittō-*ryū*

HABAKI KAGIMURA

Powerful *bangashira*, serving the shogun and seeking the secret of immortality

DOA

A small, brash Ittō-*ryū* warrior, quick on her feet and eager to brawl.

ISAKU

Dōa's trusted body-guard, a hefty Ittō-*ryū* warrior arrested for a street fight Dōa started.

BURANDO

Deranged doctor and pioneer in *kessen-chu* transference.

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessen-chu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for this and for the 100 innocent people who died at his hand while he served a corrupt lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Imprisoned in an underground cell beneath Edo Castle, Manji is an unwilling participant in Habaki Kagimura's regenerative *kessen-chu* experiments. Burando, Kagimura's lead doctor, is having some success, but all of his "miracle patients" wind up crazier than he is. While searching for Manji and Isaku, Rin and Dōa stumble across a mountain of dead bodies and a simple-minded beggar who leads them to the "Badger Hole"—an entrance to the subterranean tunnel system that runs beneath Edo Castle and possibly to Kagimura's cruel prisons. As Hyakurin rouses a small army of women whose loved ones have also disappeared inside Edo's gates, Rin and Dōa are now fully armed, ready to explore, and determined to find their missing friends . . .

designer **SCOTT COOK** editorial assistant **RYAN JORGENSEN**
editor **PHILIP SIMON** publisher **MIKE RICHARDSON**

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無限の住人

BADGER HOLE

-part three-

IN A BAMBOO GROVE?!
I'LL TELL YOU WHERE LATER...
...AND TOMORROW MORNING, YOU SHOW THOSE WOMEN OUTSIDE THE BUGYOSHO AND RŌ-YASHIKI.
I WANT YOU TO WHISPER THAT THE BODIES CAME FROM EDO CASTLE.

THAT'LL BE ENOUGH. WITHIN THE DAY...
...RUMORS WILL RACE ACROSS EDO.
THE WOMEN...
...WHO SEE THE CORPSES WILL RUSH THE NEAREST GATES. KAJIBASHIMON. SUKIYABASHIMON... THAT'S MY AIM.
TOMORROW, DŌA AND I STORM THE BADGER HOLE.
OF COURSE WE'LL SEE GUARDS LONG BEFORE WE REACH THE CASTLE...
.....
.....
...BUT IF WE CAN GET THE WOMEN TO GATHER AND CAUSE A DISTURB-ANCE...
...THEY'LL HAVE TO SEND MORE TROOPS OVER... AND THE BADGER HOLE WILL BE CLEAR.
MY ONLY WORRY IS, THERE MIGHT BE A RIOT.
IF THE GATE WARDENS THINK THERE'S AN INSUR-RECTION, IT COULD TURN BLOODY IN AN INSTANT.

SO I WANT YOU THERE, HYAKURIN, TO PREVENT THAT... TO LEAD THE WOMEN.
AFTER WHAT I SAID THIS AFTER-NOON...
...TALL ORDER.
...I'M SORRY.
IT'S NOT THAT, KID. I'M JUST SAYING IT MIGHT NOT GO THE WAY YOU WANT.
...JUST BECAUSE THERE'S A RUCKUS AT SOME GATES?
YOU THINK THEY'LL EMPTY OUT YOUR "BADGER HOLE"...
EDO CASTLE'S CHOCK FULL OF O-SAMURAI...
...AND HALF OF THEM AREN'T EVEN ON DUTY. THEY'VE GOT TIME TO BURN.
I'VE BEEN... THINKING.

MAYBE ONLY A FEW PEOPLE IN THE CASTLE EVEN KNOW...
...ABOUT THE... IMMORTALITY EXPERIMENT.
THE TOP GUYS JUST HEAR RUMORS.
LOOK AT HOW BAD IT'S GOTTEN.
DRAGGING ALL THOSE PRISONERS INTO THE CASTLE, ALL WALKS OF LIFE...
THEY CAN'T ALL APPROVE FROM THE GO-ROJU ON DOWN.
AND IN THE END, THE KEY...
...IS MANJI, AND HIS IMMORTAL BODY.
"THEY HAD GIICHI BRING HIM IN.
"JUST ONE MAN FROM KAGIMURA'S OWN MUGAI-RYŪ."

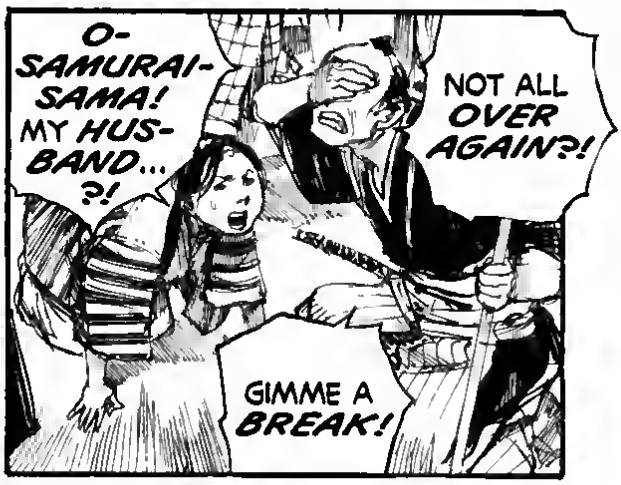
SO IF THERE'S A DISTURB-ANCE ABOUT THE EXPERI-MENT...
...WOULDN'T THE PLAYERS RUSH TO PUT IT DOWN?
SO THE ONLY PEOPLE ACTUALLY INVOLVED ARE KAGI-MURA...
TENI, WHO DO THE REAL WORK...
...AND THE GUARDS FOR THE PRISONERS. THAT'S MY CONCLUSION.
EXTREME... BUT LOGICAL.
LISTEN HERE, RIN-CHAN.
AS I HEAR IT, YOUR PLAN...
...GOES SWIM-MINGLY AS LONG AS THAT HOLE REALLY LEADS TO EDO CASTLE.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT WHAT YOU'LL DO IF IT *DOESN'T?*
...YOU'RE RIGHT, HYAKU-RIN...
...AND ABOUT THAT-- THAT *BIGGEST* PIECE...
...TO BE HONEST, I'M *NOT* CONFIDENT.
IT'S JUST INTUITION.
BUT THIS TIME, FOR *ONCE*, I'M *LEAVING* IT TO INTUITION.
THIS IS A *WOMEN'S* BATTLE.
FOR A FIGHT LIKE *THIS ONE*...
...HOW CAN IT LEAD US WRONG?

GIICHI TRIED TO STOP ME.
I'M SORRY. IT'S A GAMBLE.
WOMEN'S INTUITION. MM...? HEH!
BUT HYAKURIN. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE I CAN *TRUST*.
I'M GLAD YOU ASKED ME.
SILLY CHILD. I'M *GLAD*.

NYAAH HAH HAH!

MORE AN' MORE AN' MORE.


O-SAMURAI-SAMA! MY HUS-BAND...?!
NOT ALL OVER AGAIN?!
GIMME A BREAK!

WAAH! I WANT MY DADDY!

THE OTHER SIDE'S FILLING UP, TOO.
IT'S OUT OF CONTROL.

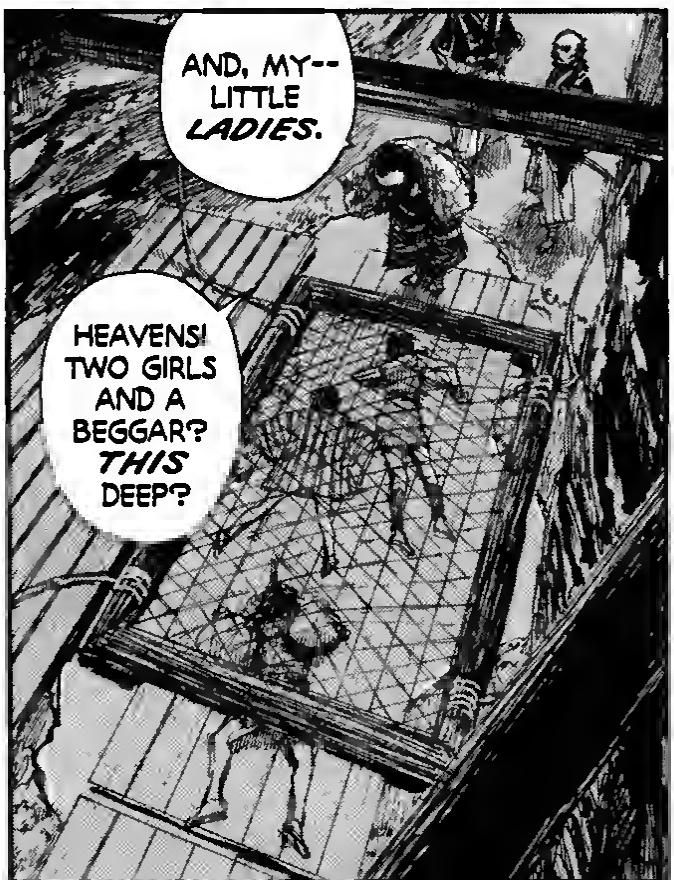
NOW YOU GO GET YOUR MEN, LITTLE RIN!
THERE'S WATER UNDER HERE.
I KNOW! I'M NOT DUMB!
BUT IT'S FREEZING.
YOU'RE AN EZOKKO, RIGHT?

WE DON'T WEAR RAGS IN EZO!
SHSH! KEEP IT DOWN.
RRMB
RRMB
KOONGG.
HN?

TSUWA-
KKK!!
.....
.....
.....
...?
AH!
HAH!
OUCH!
OUCH!
OUCH!!!
FWIPP
FWIPP

COME QUICK! WE CAUGHT SOMEBODY!!
HEY! YOU GOTTA SEE THIS, FUKIYA-- AND CALL SAKURA-SAMA!
EH? NO WAY! REALLY?
AAAH! HAH HAH!

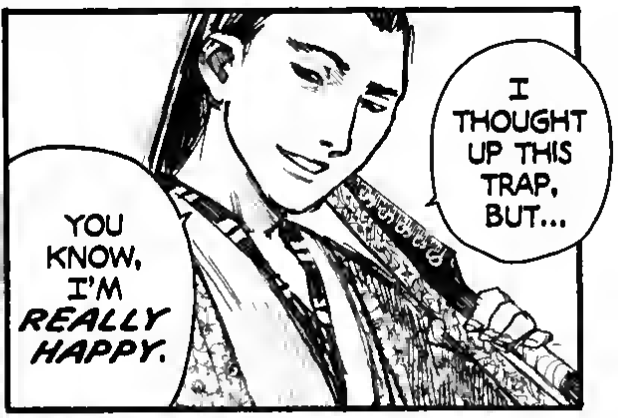
OH, THANK YOU! THANK YOU! AAAH HAH HAH!
I'M SO GLAD YOU FELL FOR IT!


AND, MY-- LITTLE LADIES.
HEAVENS! TWO GIRLS AND A BEGGAR? THIS DEEP?

YOU CAN'T GET IN HERE JUST BY SHOWING OFF SOME LEG. I'M IMPRESSED, GALS!

TO EXPLAIN...
OH, SORRY.
...BUT FOR SOME REASON, YOU LADIES DIDN'T KNOW.
OF COURSE, THEY TELL YOU THAT AT THE CHECK-POINT...
IT FALLS WHEN YOU STEP ON THE MIDDLE PLANKS.
STEPPING HERE, NO PROBLEM!
OW!!
I FOR-GOT...
I-I'M SORRY...

NO GOOD, NO GOOD. DON'T BELIEVE A WORD.
CARRYING A BLADE LIKE THIS? OH? THE TINY GIRL, TOO?
DON'T TOUCH ME, FREAK!!
RRNGG...


I THOUGHT UP THIS TRAP, BUT...
YOU KNOW, I'M REALLY HAPPY.

WASTING TAX MONEY, THEY SAID! AAAH HAH HAH!
...NO INTRUD-ERS! NOT A ONE.

.....
.....

SAKURA-SAMA!
SIX CUT DOWN, TWO UN-CONSCIOUS--
--BETWEEN HERE AND THE GATE!
WHAT?!!
...SERIOUS CRIME, HM?
WHAT'LL WE DO WITH THEM?!
HMM...

AH! YES!
HOW ABOUT TATAKI? FOR ALL OF THEM?!
WHAT?!
SAKURA-SAMA, I...
HNN?
THAT'S... NOT WHAT I MEANT.
HE MEANS, SHOULD HABAKI-DONO SEE THEM BEFORE THE RŌYASHIKI GETS THEM...?
AND BESIDES, THEY'RE WOMEN. TATAKI ISN'T MEANT FOR--
RULES FOR UP-STAIRS, RIGHT?!
THIS IS THE DARK SIDE. NO PRYING EYES HERE!

THE LASS WHO LOOKS LIKE A LEADER-- FORTY!
LITTLE GIRLS WITH BLOODY BLADES-- FORTY!
AND TWENTY FOR THE PORTER. SOUND GOOD?
WHY ME...?

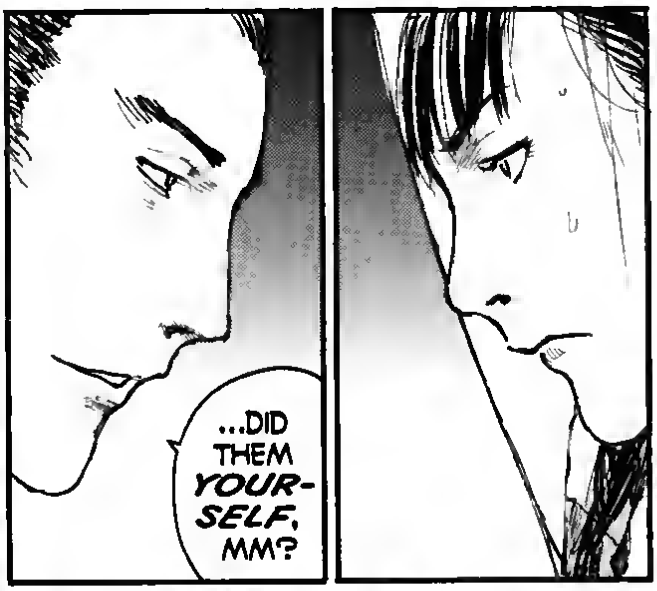
.....
.....

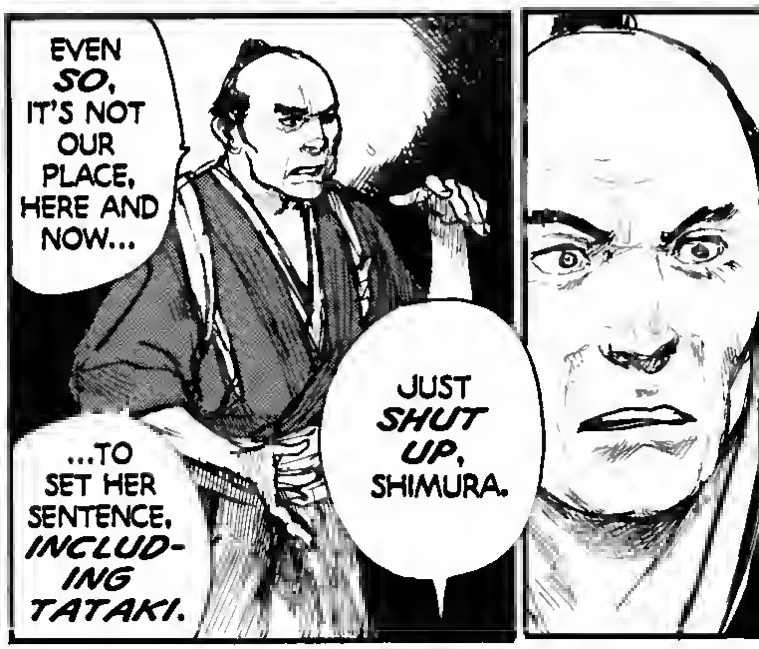
WAIT !!
SO, SET IT UP!

HM?

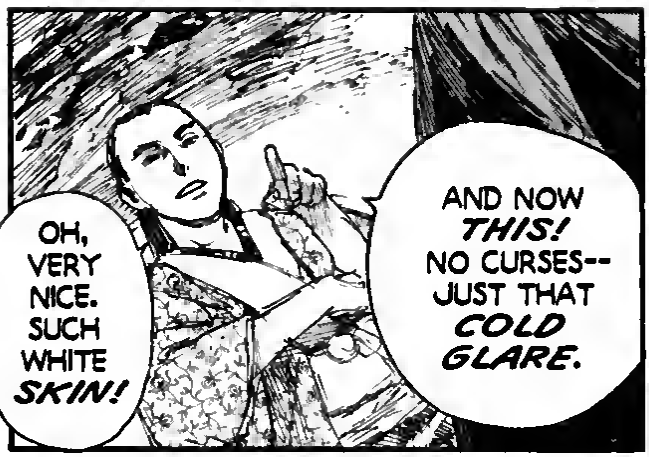
I'LL TAKE ALL THE LASHES.
?!
NO! DO YOU UNDERST--
WHAT ?!
HOH!
AND WHY MIGHT THAT BE?
THAT MAN...AS YOU SAY, JUST A PORTER.
I FORCED HIM TO COME WITH ME.
THE GIRL SEES WELL IN THE DARK. THE BLOOD-STAINED BLADE ISN'T EVEN HERS.

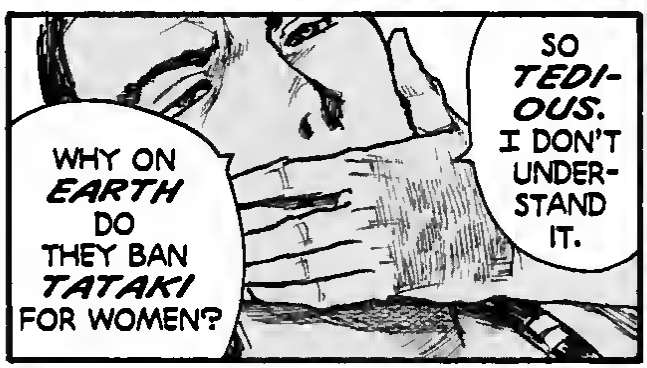
I HAD HER CARRY IT BECAUSE I HAD NOWHERE TO STASH IT.
DON'T TELL ME YOU THINK THIS *CHILD* KILLED YOUR MEN.


...DID THEM *YOUR-SELF*, MM?

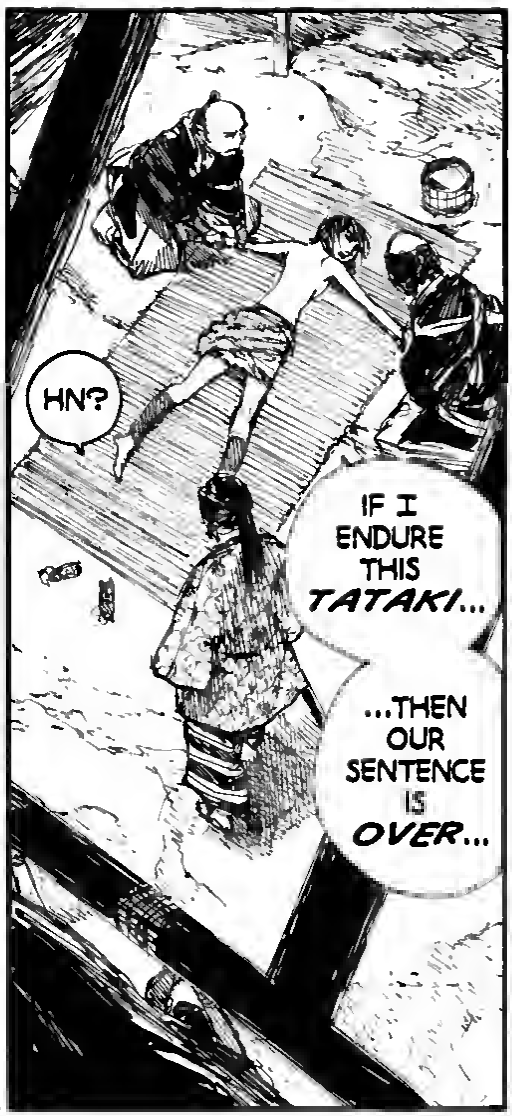

EVEN *SO*, IT'S NOT OUR PLACE, HERE AND NOW...
...TO SET HER SENTENCE, *INCLUD-ING TATAKI*.
JUST *SHUT UP*, SHIMURA.

ISN'T THIS WONDERFUL? ISN'T IT?! A HUNDRED LASHES ON A BEAUTIFUL BABE!
YESSS!! I'M SO GLAD THEY DIDN'T SEND ME UPSTAIRS!


OH, VERY NICE. SUCH WHITE *SKIN!*
AND NOW *THIS!* NO CURSES-- JUST THAT *COLD GLARE.*


WHY ON *EARTH* DO THEY BAN *TATAKI* FOR WOMEN?
SO *TEDI-OUS.* I DON'T UNDER-STAND IT.

...*PROM-ISE* ME.


HN?
IF I ENDURE THIS *TATAKI*...
...THEN OUR SENTENCE IS *OVER*...

...AND YOU WILL RELEASE US ALL WITHOUT TURNING US IN.
WE'LL LEAVE OUR WEAPONS, OF COURSE.
.....
.....
.....
A HUNDRED LASHES FOR SIX DEAD MEN, HUH?
DOESN'T ADD UP, BUT...
...WHY NOT? YOU HAVE MY WORD... FOR THOSE TWO.
...!
AAAH HAH HAH!
YOU ARE THE DUMB ONE!
AFTER A HUNDRED TATAKI, DID YOU REALLY THINK YOU'D BE ALIVE?
KAKK!
YORK!

GRUNK!
HOUGH!
RIN!
YOU... STINKING ANIMALS!
I'LL KILL YOU ALL!!
TUT TUT. HOW UNCOUTH. IT'S THE LAW.

OZU!!
FWSS
KRRK!
HAH HAH HAH! JUST DES-SERTS!
GRNF! AHN!
S-SAKURA-SAMA...?
KRK!

IT'S BAD ENOUGH WITH A WHIP-- BUT A SWORD?!
HIT HER THAT HARD A HUNDRED TIMES, SHE'LL--
TUT! SINCE WHEN DO WE CODDLE CRIM-INALS?
BUT DON'T WORRY! DON'T THEY SAY...
...WOMEN CAN TAKE MORE PAIN THAN MEN?
RIGHT?
TWO!!
OUCH!

HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH!
SO SORRY. NO WHIP, NO ONE COUNTING...
I'M AFRAID IT'S A BIT HARSHER THAN USUAL.
BUT IT'S NO PROBLEM.
IF YOU DIE TOO SOON, THE GIRL CAN HAVE THE REST. DON'T LIKE THAT?
THEN CHOKE OUT YOUR STOMACH FLUIDS, COUGH UP BLOOD, DISLOCATE YOUR SHOULDERS...
...BUT JUST MAKE SURE YOUR HEART KEEPS BEATING. EHH HEH HEH!

BRAKK!
KRAKK!
BWA HAH HAH HAH HAH!
RIN!
RIN!
FWITCH
FWITCH
GTCH!
GRTCH!
HRNN-GGG...
!
.....
.....
.....
...WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

.....
.....?
...UUNG...
HICK!
RNG!
WHA...
WHAT...?
WHAT'S THAT AWFUL... SOUND?!
TO BE CONTINUED...!

NEXT MONTH:
BADGER HOLE
Part 4 of 4

IN NOVEMBER: The final "Badger Hole" chapter, and the *final issue* of the monthly *Blade of the Immortal* comic. Listening to *Blade* fans and adapting to the majority of our readers' wishes, we will be ending the *Blade of the Immortal* comic book series next month with issue #131—in order to put more focus on our collected edition program. Please look to Dark Horse's *Blade of the Immortal* "trade collection" volumes for the continuation of this manga masterpiece. You can find on-sale dates and information on how to order *Blade of the Immortal* books at darkhorse.com. In our final issue (it does feel weird to type that out . . . yeesh), you'll witness a strange, new Itto-*ryū* warrior in action, and we'll end the *longest-running* standalone English-language manga monthly with a message from the editor, a pinup from *Blade* letterer and brilliant cartoonist Tomoko Saito, a note on *Blade*'s English-language conception from manga pioneer Toren Smith, an essay on serialized manga in the United States by Carl Gustav Horn, and pinups from two indie comix stars. Vasilis Lolos (*Pirates of Coney Island, The Last Call*) contributes a mystical Manji piece, and illustrator Zachary Baldus (*American Splendor, Smallville Magazine*) delivers a stunning look at head-and-heart-stealing Gilchi (he did steal our hearts in *Blade* #127—didn't he, folks?). We know that our monthly readers will miss their regular dose of Samura carnage, character development, and conspiracies, and we ask you to proclaim your devotion to Samura-dono on our manga message boards (over at darkhorse.com) . and you can send e-mails directly to me via blade@darkhorse.com. Please understand that everyone involved in producing the *Blade of the Immortal* monthly series will be sad to see it end, but the time has come to move to a "trade only" program. It's been exciting to include readers' letters and art, Jhomar Soriano's parody strips, rare Hiroaki Samura illustrations and text pieces, and pinups from generous professionals in the American comics scene in these monthly offerings . . . and we hope to bring those unique bonuses and a whole lotta love to the table in upcoming *Blade of the Immortal* volumes. Hey! We've had a lengthy run here, and everyone on the *Blade* team is also *damn proud* of this long-running, multiple-award-winning series. It's been an exciting four years for me, helming the English-language *Blade of the Immortal* monthlies from December 2003 to November 2007, and (don'tcha know) our final issue will hit comic book stores *two days* before my birthday. Augh! So please visit next month—to celebrate *Blade*'s amazing monthly record and to hear our new friend Ozuhan say, "O'pau! Pau! Pau!"

—Philip Simon, editor

GLOSSARY

Bangashira: Head of the *banshū.*

Bangata: The castle watch.

Bugyōsho: The Edo-era equivalent of a police precinct station.

Banshū: Officers serving under the shogun, usually assigned to Edo Castle to defend the shogun himself.

Bugyō: A high-ranked samurai in charge of keeping the peace, with the help of the men under his command and volunteer "posse" members.

Edo: Capitol of pre-modern Japan. Later renamed Tokyo.

Emma: Buddhist god of death, also known as *Enma.*

Ezo: Hokkaido and the other islands north of Japan. At the time, they were still controlled by indigenous *Ainu* peoples and were a perilous back door into closed Japan for foreign goods and people.

Ezokko: A child of *Ezo*, the old name for *Hokkaido.*

Ittō-ryū: The radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa.

Kessen-chu: The "sacred bloodworms." A person infected by them cannot die but feels pain like a mortal.

Mugai-ryū: Sword school of the Akagi assassins; literally, "without form."

Mutenichi-ryū: The sword school led by Rin's father (now deceased), destroyed by Anotsu Kagehisa.

Ryū: A sword school.

Ryō: A high-value gold coin.

Rōyashiki: Jail.

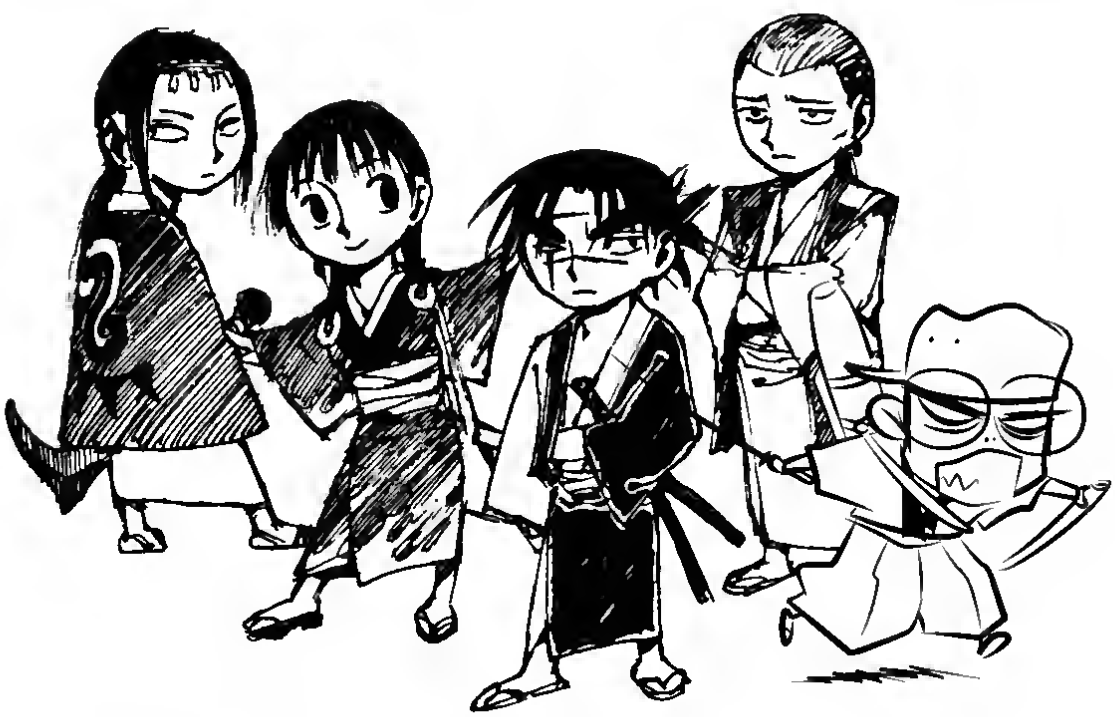
Tataki: A form of punishment by (traditionally) flogging an offender either fifty or one hundred times with a cane. These beatings were prohibited for samurai, priests, and women.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork: The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Some manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue: Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the un-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

FACING PAGE: Part 2 of Nathan Fox's "Magatsu versus Gilchi" vertical diptych (find Part 1 in the back of *Blade* #129).



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A GREEN GIANT SCAN

DCP

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